

HAMPSHIRE MEETING.

Property Tax.—Trick of the London Press.

HAVING taken a part personally at this meeting in my own county, it was not my intention to have made its proceedings a subject of observation in print, because it seems rather unfair to avail myself of an advantage, not possessed by those gentlemen, from whom I had the misfortune to differ in opinion. But, I am compelled to do this, on the present occasion, in my own defence, seeing that the London daily newspapers have wholly misrepresented the proceedings; have garbled every thing that they have touched; have suppressed the Petition which I moved; have exhibited me as guilty of the most glaring inconsistency, and as having behaved in a disorderly and even ridiculous manner. I shall, I trust, therefore, be excused for giving an account of the Proceedings, through the only channel that I have access to, especially as the discussion embraced some great political principles, in which the nation are, of course, deeply interested. When I have given an account of the Proceedings, I will give an account of the *Trick of the London daily Press*, and endeavour to open the eyes of the public to the true character of that venal instrument, of all that is hypocritical and corrupt.

Before we come to the Meeting itself, we ought to notice the previous steps. A Requisition to the Sheriff, signed by 53 gentlemen, was left with the *Deputy Sheriff at Winchester*. These gentlemen were, principally, land-owners as well as farmers, but none of them distinguished as belonging to either of the *Parties*, as they are usually termed. After this Requisition was set on foot, another was put in circulation by what is, ludicrously enough, called the *Whigs*; and, though the former petition was first in the hands of the Deputy Sheriff, the Meeting was called upon the latter, on the ground,

that it first reached the High Sheriff, notwithstanding that, in all other cases, an application to the former is looked upon, and, in law, is an application to the latter.

These circumstances would have been almost unworthy of notice, if they had not had an effect upon the proceedings of the day; but, as will be seen presently, they had a very material effect upon those proceedings, and tended to shew, in no very amiable light, the character and real views of the party, by whom the second Requisition was urged forward. For my part, I signed neither of the Requisitions, and, until my arrival at Winchester, had had no communication with any one upon the subject. I had determined upon the course to pursue, and left co-operation to chance, being ten thousand times more anxious to inculcate a sound principle or two, as to the rights and liberties of my country, than to relieve myself from the Property Tax, and all the other taxes put together!

About eleven o'clock, that is to say, about an hour before the Meeting took place, some gentlemen joined me at the inn where I was. Sometime after this, I drew up a petition to offer to the Meeting, in case the one to be presented by the Whigs, should not be such as I approved of. So far was I from having time to copy the paper, I was drying the ink at the fire, when word was brought us, that the Meeting was begun. Cramming the paper into my pocket, without reading it even once over, I hastened to the Castle, and entered the Court-house in the middle of a speech of Mr. PORTALL, who, I learnt, had opened the business of the day. The fairest way for me to act as to this Speech, is to insert the report of it as I find it in the *Times newspaper* of the 25th of January. The speech was an hour long; but, really, the reporter has had the ability to bring into about ten minutes compass all the material points of it. The Speech was delivered with

great clearness and eloquence; but, generally speaking, there was nothing new in it, which the report here inserted does not contain:—

“ Mr. PORTALL came forward to move for a petition to be presented to the House of Commons, against the revival of this tax. He, as being a Commissioner for collecting this tax, had many opportunities of considering the machinery of it, and witnessing its unavoidable oppression: on this account, he did not hesitate to put himself forward on this occasion, although there were many present of superior weight and property in the county. He should begin by entirely disclaiming all party motives, and therefore he should not consider who was the man who first proposed the tax, or who it was that increased it. If he felt any confidence that this most obnoxious tax would be suffered to die away of itself at the period which the legislature had marked out for its decrease, he should not have thought it necessary to disturb its expiring moments. Ministers had, however, both by their demeanour and their language in the House, as well as out of it, by their refusing to answer questions, and by their sending private letters to their friends whom they supposed to have considerable local interest, shewed pretty clearly to the country, that it was their intention to propose the renewal of the tax. If this tax was really as good in itself as any other tax by which the necessary supplies were to be raised, he should not have such great objections to it. He was convinced, however, that this tax which professed to be equal and impartial, was in fact the most unequal and the most partial. It was said to be a tax upon profits, and yet no deduction was made on account of the necessary expense of repairs. Was the expense that a landlord or farmer was obliged to incur for keeping the premises in repair, to be called their profits? Were the three-fourths of the tax upon land which the farmers are obliged to pay to be called a tax upon their profits? When a lease was taken for 21 years, subject to a heavy fine on the renewal, no deduction was made on account of this fine. The case was still harder with professional men and tradesmen,

“ who by their mental energy, and bodily health, were just in a condition to maintain their families, and from whom much of the fruits of their industry was torn by the operation of this tax. What could be more unjust, than that such men should be obliged to pay the same tax for an income so acquired, as if their income had been the regular produce of large sums invested in the funds? This was not like the other taxes which were paid indirectly or collaterally. It was a tax on the thing itself. If he had ten guineas on his table, the tax-gatherer took one of them. This appeared in its principle to be something of a highwayman's-tax. It was extorted, not by the means of a pistol, but by the surcharges and surveys. The surveyor administered to the party the oath of purgation, and then the inquisition followed. This tax went to destroy all confidence between man and man. No man dared to speak of his circumstances, for fear of being exposed to the surveyor. In this country there were men who would not be afraid to take a lion by the beard, but who trembled before the surveyor, who is, in fact, the greatest bug-bear in the land. It might be asked, how came it that such a tax was ever suffered? It was because it was then stated that the enemy was at our doors, and that every thing which we valued was at stake. Under such circumstances, the country was not very particular in enquiring into the means which were proposed for our safety. The Legislature had expressly stated those circumstances in the first act, the 38th of the King, and mentioned in the preamble, “ that the safety of his Majesty's Crown, the security of our holy religion, our laws, lives, and properties, were at hazard.” If Ministers now wished to renew the tax, it would be for them to shew that the same circumstances now exist. The Legislature had always shewn the greatest anxiety about the time in which the act was to expire; and after fixing that time in all their acts, they added “ and no longer.” The period at which its expiration was fixed, was the 6th of April, after the conclusion of the war then existing. If ever there was a pledge given by the Legislature to the country, that a tax should expire at a

"certain time, that pledge had been
 "given in this instance. The country
 "had performed its part of the contract,
 "and submitted to the tax with unex-
 "ampled patience, as long as the war
 "continued. They had now a clear and
 "irrefragable right to the benefits of the
 "engagements on the other side, and to
 "expect that the tax should not be re-
 "newed. If the tax were now renewed,
 "it would not only be a gross violation
 "of the contract, but it would be an ag-
 "gravated breach of trust, by making
 "the very violation of their contract
 "a sort of precedent for further viola-
 "tions. It was his firm opinion, that if
 "the tax were but submitted to for an-
 "other year, it would never be taken off.
 "New circumstances and new pretences
 "would then arise; and rather than
 "give up the tax, Ministers would pre-
 "fer another war, perhaps with *the Dey*
 "of Algiers, the Nabob of Arcot, or some
 "of those gentlemen. He should object
 "to any modification of the tax. If it
 "were reduced to one per cent. or one-
 "fourth per cent. he should equally
 "object to it, as an unfit tax to be intro-
 "duced into a free country. Every man
 "who is now summoned before the sur-
 "veyor goes up like a culprit, and feels
 "like one. The difference is, that by
 "the law of England, every man is pre-
 "sumed innocent until he is found
 "guilty; whereas, before the surveyors,
 "every man is presumed guilty, until he
 "is found innocent. He did not mean
 "to cast the slightest reflection on the
 "surveyors personally, but without such
 "a course the tax could not be raised.—
 "There was another subject which af-
 "fected the people of this country al-
 "most as much as the property-tax.
 "Among those taxes which were called
 "war taxes, and which by law would
 "expire about the same time with the
 "property tax, there was one of no less
 "than two shillings a bushel on malt.
 "This bore no less on the comforts of the
 "poor and middling orders, than it did
 "upon the interests of agriculture. He
 "had, therefore introduced into the peti-
 "tion a prayer, that this tax also should
 "not be revived. As this was not regu-
 "larly introduced in the requisition, it
 "was only by the pleasure and sufferance
 "of the Meeting, that he could incorpo-
 "rate it with his petition. (*The sense of*
the Meeting on this point was testified
by loud applause.) He concluded by

"moving a resolution, that it was expe-
 "dient to present a Petition to the House
 "of Commons *against the revival of those*
taxes.

"SIR W. HEATHCOTE shortly second-
 "ed the Resolutions, and observed that he
 "had voted *against the new Malt Duty.*

This motion being made and seconded,
 Mr. HUNT rose to speak; but was called
 to order by Mr. PORTALL, and the Sheriff
 decided, that he could not be permitted
 to speak till Lord NOTHESK had read a peti-
 tion; that is to say, Mr. Portall was per-
 mitted to make a long speech and a motion,
 which motion was seconded, and Lord
 NOTHESK was to make another motion,
 and that was to be seconded also, before
 any person on the other side was to be
 permitted to speak! If this was fair and
 regular, it must be acknowledged, that
 Hampshire has its peculiar mode of con-
 ducting debates and discussions.

The petition was then produced and
 moved, and, having been read, was se-
 conded by SIR HARRY TICHBORNE.
 Here Mr. HUNT requested that the first
 requisition might be read. It now ap-
 peared, that that requisition included,
 by name, the *War Tax upon Malt*,
 which, as the reader will perceive, had
 been embodied into the *Whig Petition*,
 though not mentioned in the *Whig requi-
 sition*. The motive for this act of irre-
 gularity was clearly this: that the Whigs
 knowing that, if they left it out, an
 amendment would be moved, and that,
 thus, they would be defeated upon their
 own dunghill, seeing that the Malt Tax
 is full as burdensome and as odious as
 the Property Tax. The getting over this
 irregularity by "taking the sense of the
 "Meeting," as it was called, amounted to
 just nothing at all; for, by the same rule,
 any thing might be introduced into the
 Petition; and yet, as the reader will
 presently see, great efforts were made to
 set my *Petition* aside upon the ground,
 that it contained matter of complaint,
 not specified in the requisition.

Having thus shewn the tactics of the
 Whigs this far, and exposed the motive,
 whence they were led to introduce the
 Malt Tax, I now proceed to the discussion
 of the Petition, into which we were per-
 mitted to enter, though we had not been
 permitted to oppose Mr. Portall's resolu-
 tion. The Whig Petition, as the Times
 newspaper observes "was then read
 "by the Under-Sheriff. It was of cog-

"siderable length, as it embraced the
"different points of Mr. Portall's speech,
"and the preambles of the different Acts
"of Parliament on this subject. It also
"alluded to the new creation of Knights,
"and observed, that as the Prince Re-
"gent had been advised to reward the
"splendid services performed by the navy
"and army, his civil subjects also, who
"had discharged all their duties during
"the arduous contest, and patiently sub-
"mitted to such heavy burthens, con-
"ceived themselves entitled to some con-
"sideration for their discharge of duty,
"and an alleviation from this most op-
"pressive tax."

I opposed this Petition, which I repre-
sented as more resembling a lawyer's
brief, in form and language, and a bill in
Chancery against the Regent, in matter,
than a County Petition against a Tax.
I observed, that the passage, alluding to
the new creation of *Knights of the Bath*
was peculiarly objectionable; that it sig-
nified to the House of Commons a sort
of envious and vain feeling; a poor
sneaking after a share in the baubles of
Knighthood, which was very disgusting,
and in which I was sure the Meeting
did not participate.—[Here I was inter-
rupted by Mr. Portall calling to order.
I was told, that I was *wandering from the
subject before us*. The reader will judge
what the Order of the Bath had to do with
a Petition against the revival of the Malt
and Property Taxes; but, he will, I am
sure, clearly see, that, as the allusion
formed part of the Petition, I was strictly
in order, while I was objecting to that
part of the Petition.]—I next observed,
that the name of *highwayman's tax*, ap-
plied to the Tax on Property by Mr. POR-
TALL, formed a curious contrast with
another part of his speech; for, there he
had told us, that the tax was imposed
at a moment, when the enemy was at
our door, and that the tax was "*necessary*
"to the *safety of his Majesty's Crown*,
"the *security of our holy religion*, our
"laws, lives, and properties!" What! I
observed, and do the Meeting, then, really
believe, that *the king* and our *holy reli-
gion* stood in need of *highwaymen* mea-
sures to insure their safety? And, can
the Meeting, can the people of England,
look foreigners in the face, and prate
about English liberty, while they confess,
that we have lived for nearly twenty years
under the operation of power, resembling

that of *highway robbers*. But, I observed,
if this was really the case, *who* were
the highwaymen, this being a question
of very material importance to the Coun-
try, who had, during all this time,
elected and re-elected the men who im-
posed and supported this tax; that Sir
WILLIAM HEATHCOTE, who had se-
conded Mr. Portall's motion, was one of
the first imposers, one of the supporters;
that the *party*, whose friends had now
brought forward the Petition, had raised
the tax from six and a quarter to its pre-
sent amount, and that they had done it,
too, in the most odious, insulting, and un-
feeling manner.—(Here I was called to
order again, though I was only asking
who the highwaymen were, if it was a
highwayman's tax.)—I next observed,
that, seeing that the Gentleman thought
the imposing of the tax the act of high-
waymen, and, as it is well known, that
highwaymen generally begin by *stopping
the mouth*, that they next *bind the persons*
of their clients, and *conclude by ramming
their hands into their pockets*, I should
not wonder if the Gentleman were to tell
us, that the Parliament who imposed this
tax had proceeded in somewhat the same
way, and that the laws shackling the
Press and diminishing *Personal liberty*,
passed during the same period, ought, at
any rate, if we abstained from such irre-
verend descriptions of them, to receive
our reprobation as well as the law im-
posing a tax on property. Upon this
ground I was proceeding to state *what
those laws were*, and to shew how law-
making proceeded, step, by step, until
it arrived at that stage, when, as the
Gentleman had asserted, it assumed the
character of a highwayman's conduct. I
was beginning with the law, which made it
high treason to send a bushel of potatoes
or a pair of shoes to the Republicans of
France who, by the bye, had now some
food to spare for us.—[Here I was stopped
this matter being wholly inadmissible,
having nothing at all to do with the sub-
ject of the Requisition; though, as the
reader will perceive, it had quite as much
to do with it as the *Order of the Bath*
could possibly have.]—I next observed
upon what Mr. Portall had stated as to
the *cause of the tax*, and *how it came to
be laid*, and said, that it was a *false alarm*
that prevailed at the time; that the enemy
was *never at our door*; that he never did
attempt to land, and that there never



was a time when the people of England, of their own force, were not able to defend the country; that no army, and, of course, no tax, was wanted to preserve the country against any enemy that it ever had; and, that it was very clear, and had long since been so, to the whole world, that the war was made, and the tax raised, for the purpose of *crushing republican liberty in France*, and of stopping, by that means, its extension all over the world.—I was proceeding to shew, that, in part, this object had been accomplished; but, that we had *ruined ourselves by the success*.—[Here, however, I was stopped; though, I thought, that I had as much right to go into this matter as the other side had to state *their* notion of the *cause* and *object* of the tax.]—I next observed, that the Petition on the table, though it included the *War Malt Tax*, did not go nearly *far enough* for me; that I should move an amendment, including all the war taxes, in the first place, being of opinion, that it was a matter of indifference in what shape, or under what name a tax was raised, if raised all; that, in the end, it must be paid by the public at large, and that it signified not one straw to any man, whether he paid it, as the old saying is, in meal or in malt. But, that I did not stop here; that I was for praying, that, *no other taxes* might be imposed instead of the war taxes, and was for expressing the opinion of the Meeting, that there was *no necessity* for any other taxes. All this, however, I observed, was a trifle, in my estimation, compared with the laws, passed during the war, respecting the *Press* and respecting *personal liberty*, some of which were still in existence, and, therefore, I should propose to pray for the repeal of these laws also.—After a great deal of further interruption from the opposite party, I moved a Petition, the *substance* of which only I can give, having been deprived of the document itself in the manner hereafter to be described. The Petition, moved by me, was in substance as follows:

That the war taxes had now no longer any pretence for their continuance, seeing that peace with all the world had been happily restored:—That no new taxes in their stead would be necessary to support the *credit* and *honour* of the nation, provided that

a system of economy and peaceful government were adopted in place of the enormous expenditure, and that immense military establishment, which was wholly unknown to our forefathers, and which now threatened to swallow up all the civil powers and distinctions of the country:—That all pretences for alarm having now ceased, the laws passed during the late war, cramping the liberty of the Press, and also personal liberty, ought now to be repealed:—That therefore, we prayed, that all the war taxes might cease, agreeably to law; that no other taxes might be imposed in their stead; and that all the laws, passed during the war, which diminish the liberties of the people might also be repealed.

Mr. HUNT seconded the motion, and, though many attempts were made by Mr. PORTALL to interrupt him even while he was *answering* the arguments of that gentleman, he proceeded in a way, and with an effect that made *faction* feel very sore.—He observed, that the *war malt tax* was introduced by the other side, not from choice but from compulsion; that they had foreseen, that unless they introduced it, they would be beaten on their own ground.—He observed, that the worthy Baronet, (Sir William Heathcote) had taken great credit for having opposed the war tax upon malt, but, perhaps, that might be accounted for by the fact, that this was a great *barley* country; and that the worthy baronet was owner of no small slice of this same country; that as to numerous other laws that he had assisted in passing and supporting, though of infinitely more consequence to the people, he had appeared to feel less acutely.—He observed, that he heartily rejoiced at the conclusion of peace with *America*, and thanked the King's ministers for having acted so wisely; and that, though the Meeting would feel with him deep regret that the war had not sooner terminated, and before so many disasters had taken place, he was sure that every Englishman would feel consolation in reflecting that, if the trident of the seas had been snatched from us in a few instances; if we had

now and then suffered defeats on an element called our own, it had been from the *arms of free men*, and not from those of the *hirelings of despots*.—In alluding to Mr. PORTALL's assertion, that the Income Tax, being laid on in a time of great public peril, it was suffered to pass with *little opposition or comment*; he observed, that the *contrary* was the *truth*; that no tax ever met with such strenuous opposition; that the now RIGHT HONOURABLE GEORGE TIERNEY, in particular, called it by names almost as odious as that now applied to it by Mr. Portall; that he even went so far as to declare, that the people would be fully justified in *resisting it by force of arms*; but that this was the *out of place* sentiment of Mr. TIERNEY, who afterwards, when in *place*, voted for raising this same tax from six and a quarter to ten per cent.—[Here Mr. PORTALL made a very strenuous effort to stop Mr. HUNT; but the Sheriff said he was in order; as well he might, seeing that Mr. HUNT was only shewing that what Mr. PORTALL had stated as to the silent acquiescence of the country, when the tax was laid on, was *not true*.]—Mr. HUNT continued by observing, that the gentleman deprecated all enquiry into the conduct of those who had laid on, or raised, the tax; but, that it was material for the meeting to recollect, who it was that had imposed and augmented what had been called a *highwayman's tax*, and especially when the faction, who had brought forward this charge, were heard endeavouring to throw the blame upon the present ministers, and to excite and keep up suspicions against them.—He entered into a curious and interesting calculation as to the tax upon *Barley*, before its juice reached the mouth; shewing that every load of Barley (40 bushels) paid nearly *twenty pence* in tax before it came to the lips of the labouring man, though the price now received by the farmer was not more than *seven pounds*; so that in every pot of beer which the labourer bought at a public house (if the proportion of the farmer's taxes were included) he swallowed *more than four-pence in tax*.—But, he observed, in conclusion (after a variety of other observations), this meeting presents a very curious spectacle. He said, that he had many persons in his eye, who, in that very place, had frequently met to address

the Government, to approve of the undertaking and the continuing of the late wars, in the prosecution of which they offered and pledged "*their last shilling*" and "*their last drop of blood*."—And yet, said he, though the government do not ask, and never have asked, for a single drop of their blood, being contented with *the shilling alone*, this singular forbearance is repaid by the virulent and gross abuse, which we have this day heard bestowed upon it, and that, too, by the party, who had its full share in the very measure now so bitterly complained of.

Mr. PORTALL rose to answer what had been said on our side. He objected to the amendment because it included matter, not notified in the requisition, and insisted strongly, that, in asking for *so much*, we ran a risk of *losing all*. He complained, that an unfair advantage had been taken of him in the comments made on his expressions respecting the *highwayman*; said that the words dropped from him *incautiously*, and that they certainly called for an apology. But, it is but justice to observe, that no part of his speech was *so much applauded as this*.

When I came to *reply* I was interrupted. It was contended that the business was now *closed*; that Mr. PORTALL had *made his motion*, that we had *answered*, that he had now *replied*, and that there *the discussion closed*. But, the reader will see, that it was not *his* motion but *mine*, which was now under discussion. His had been *made, seconded, put, and carried*, without our being permitted to *speak*. Then came Lord Northesk's motion. That was put aside for a while by my amendment, which was now about to be put. What right, then, in this stage of the proceedings, could Mr. PORTALL have to the *last speech*?

The question was now to be taken upon my amendment; but before the question was put, I did obtain a hearing, and amongst other things, I said nearly what is, as follows, stated by the COURIER.—"In the Hampshire Meeting on Tuesday, Mr. COBBETT, among other things, said the 'Gentlemen who brought forward the Petition had acted disingenuously; they had said nothing of the difficulties of the Government. Did they mean to say, that the Government could go on without the Property Tax? Did they wish to substitute any other tax?'—(Cries of, we have

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“ *nothing to do with that! and, order!*)
 “ He would ask them if they were ready
 “ to vote that the army should be dis-
 “ banded?”—The HIGH SHERIFF said
 “ he must take the sense of the Meeting,
 “ whether Mr. COBBETT should be al-
 “ lowed to go on in this manner. Mr.
 “ COBBETT said, he was ready to shew
 “ that Government could not go on with-
 “ out this Tax.—Mr. PORTALL said,
 “ they had nothing to do with that at
 “ present.—Mr. COBBETT said, they could
 “ not shew him that Government could
 “ go on without this Tax. It was, there-
 “ fore from the *factionousness of party*
 “ that the question was brought forward.
 “ It was the *trick of a party to impose*
 “ *upon the people*, by telling them that
 “ they were to get this Tax off; but they
 “ could not get it off, without having
 “ another, equal in amount, substituted
 “ for it.”—I said this, or nearly this;
 but, the COURIER has dealt as unfairly
 by me as the Whigs dealt by the Meeting;
 because, I said, *along with this*, some-
 thing which the COURIER has taken care
 to *leave out*: I said that I would defy
 the Gentlemen to shew, that the Govern-
 ment could pay the public creditors, or
 go on at all, without the *two taxes* men-
 tioned in their petition (amounting to a
 full *third part* of the present revenue),
unless the whole of the army, about all
 the navy, and a part of the sinking fund
 into the bargain, were, at once lopped off;
 and that, therefore, to stir up the people to
 pray for the taking away of the revenue,
 without stating, at the same time, the
 means by which the Government *might*
go on without it, as I had stated in my
 motion, was to act *factionously*, was to de-
 lude and deceive the people.—Strange to
 say, this was deemed *out of order*. One
 man proposes the abolition of taxes, ano-
 ther objects to his proposition because
 the Government cannot go on without
 the said taxes, and yet the second is
 deemed *out of order*!—I was for taking
 off the taxes, but then I was also for saying,
 at the same time, and in the same Petition,
 that it was our conviction, that the *Credit*
 and *Honour* of the nation might be
maintained without those taxes; because,
 if the Meeting did not think this, their
 petition must proceed either from faction
 or ignorance.

The Amendment, moved by me, was
 put and lost, not by a “ *large*,” but by
 a very small majority; after which the

PETITION, moved by the Earl of North-
 esk, was carried by a like majority. It
 was then voted to be sent about for sig-
 natures, to be presented by the County
 Members, who, by a vote of the Meet-
 ing, on the motion of Mr. HUNT, were
 instructed to support it, when presented.
 The thanks of the Meeting having been
 unanimously voted to the High Sheriff,
 (Mr. Norris of Basing Park) he, in an-
 swer, observed, that he hoped, the next
 time he met the County, he should have
 to congratulate them on the Death and
 Burial of the *Property Tax*.

Whoever was at the Meeting, and who
 reads this, will say, that I have here
 given, substantially, a *fair* account of the
 proceedings. I had not the smallest hope
 of carrying my motion. I had not sign-
 ed any requisition; I had consulted no-
 body; I had not talked upon the subject
 to more than four persons out of my own
 family. I cared not a pin about the re-
 peal of the Income tax, *unless* all the war
 taxes and all the laws about the *press*
 and *personal* and *political liberty* were
 included; and the only disappointment
 that I met with, was, *that so large a*
part of the Meeting were with me.—
 What has been said of the *disingenuous-*
ness of the Hampshire Petition will ap-
 ply to almost all the other petitions
 against the Property Tax. Westminster
 and the City of Worcester (and there may
 be some others) are exceptions. But,
 with these exceptions, it is a *clamour*
 against a tax, and merely against *a tax*.
 It is an outcry for relief, without a word
 said as to the *causes* of the burden, or as
 to the means of doing without it. Mr.
 PORTALL, at our Meeting, said that he
 should approve of taking away a part of
 the *Sinking-fund*; the same has been
 said at other Meetings. Perhaps this
 may be practicable; but, if it be done
 without a total disbanding of the army
 and a discharge of nearly all the navy,
 will the funded property retain its va-
 lue; or, any value at all? If the fund-
 holders saw, that the taxes were so re-
 duced as to enable the country to pros-
 per under them, they need not care about
 the Sinking-fund; but, what will be their
 prospect, if, out of 40 millions of reve-
 nue, only 20 millions are wanted for the
 army and navy alone, while their own
 share of that revenue, exclusive of the
 Sinking-fund, amounts to 25 to 28 mil-
 lions? The remedy is, then, a reduction

of the Navy to its state of 1788; a total discharge of the regular army; and an organization of a military force for the defence of the country upon the plan of MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, which puts arms into the hands of all those who vote for members of parliament, which gives a vote to every man who pays a tax of any description or to any amount however small, and which impartially calls forth every able man to the performance of that first of all duties, the defence of his native land, its liberties and laws.

TRICK OF THE LONDON PRESS.

THE effect of this Trick I mentioned in my last. The reason why I enter fully into an exposure of it, is, that the public, and that the Americans and French, may be able to form a correct judgment of the state of the English Daily Press, and may estimate its productions accordingly. I am the more desirous of doing this at the present moment, because the London newspapers, and especially the most venal of them, are labouring hard to pave the way for some measure (it must be an act of Parliament) to enable them to be sent abroad *duty free*, in order, say they, "that England, that the *true character* of England, that the *principles and conduct* of England, may *be known* upon the Continent of Europe, where, now, owing to the influence of the *French press*, England has *lost*, and is still losing ground, both in *weight and character*."—It is surprising, that they should have forgotten *America*. That, say what they will, is the country, where we ought to endeavour to recover our character. But, do these men suppose, that the nations of the Continent, do not know how to judge of the principles and conduct of England without the illuminating influence of their balderdash; their Lottery and Quack puffs; their paltry party quarrels; their garbled reports; their endless strings of *paid-for paragraphs*? SIR JOHN MURRAY, in the out-set of his most able defence, was obliged to occupy the time of his judges for half an hour in stating his *complaints against the press*, the paragraphs in which had actually caused him to be *condemned* by the public before he was brought to trial; and, he alluded particularly to an infamous paragraph in the *TIMES* news-paper, which coupled

his conduct with that of his *brother*, who is long since dead. The attacks upon SIR GEORGE PREVOST were of the same character. The *MORNING CHRONICLE*, in the most foul manner, assailed this gentleman's character, attributed our failures to his cowardice or his folly, and this too, without the smallest foundation. Indeed, there is scarcely any man, or any woman, who becomes at all pre-eminent in the eye of the public, and who cannot or will not *pay* the London Daily Newspapers, whose characters, and, in some cases, whose property and whose life, is safe. The public have lately seen that the trifling private concern of my accident by fire, could not escape them. They could not let even that pass, without an attempt (it proved *vain* to be sure) to deprive me of the benefit of my having *insured* the premises, by insinuating that I set fire to them myself, a crime which is *death* by the law. The recent attempt of these papers to *prevent Mrs. Percival from marrying*, is an instance of their baseness in another line. There is no doubt of their having been *paid* for it any more than there is of their being paid for the puffs on *private characters* which they daily publish; and for their attacks on private characters. They have carried on this trade for years; and the traffic has increased, because the severity of punishments for what are called political libels, has naturally put the Daily-press into worse and worse hands.—And, yet, these are the people, who represent themselves as the organs of English Honour! Their papers, they tell us, would *enlighten all Europe*, if they could but export them *duty free*! Is it not a bounden duty on every one, who is able to do it, to expose the tricks of this vile press? Do not morality and political principle call aloud for this exposure? Last year, at this season, these prints were bellowing forth invectives against those who asked for a Corn Bill; they were marshalling the worst passions of the multitude against the owners of land and the growers of corn, whom they accused of a wish to *starve the people*. They are now abusing those, who think a Corn Bill unnecessary, and ascribing to them *sedition motives*. And, this; this (oh, impudence!) is the press, which is to *ENLIGHTEN* all Europe?

Now, as to the Hampshire Meeting, the facts are these: there were several newspa-

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per reporters at Winchester for the purpose of reporting the proceedings on Sir John Murray's Trial. About an hour before the County Meeting took place, one of these gentlemen came to me at the *Inn where I had put up*, to ask me, whether I should have any papers, or memorandums, which might assist in making the report of the proceedings more complete, as he thought it would be important to obtain such papers; to which I answered, that, if I should have any such, he should have them, (and as I know him) I observed, that I should be glad to see them in his hands. After the Meeting was over, the same gentleman came to me, while I was at dinner, to apply for a copy of the Petition which I had presented, in order that it might be forwarded for insertion, with the rest of the proceedings, in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Herald*, the *Morning Post*, and the *British Press*. I told him, that I had no copy; but, at his request, and upon his engaging to forward it for insertion, I sent to the Deputy Sheriff, obtained the original and had it delivered to him. Before I left Winchester, I saw the same gentleman again, Mr. HUNT of Andover and Mr. HINXMAN of Chilling being present. This gentleman then informed us that the PETITION was sent off to be inserted in the Report, we being anxious, that it should appear in print if any thing of ours did appear; because our principles and wishes would then defy misrepresentation. But, upon being informed by him, that the four papers before-mentioned had COALESCED as to reports from Winchester; and that each had one fourth of the report sent to it, and, after setting up, sent its part to each of the other three papers. Mr. HUNT asked, which of the papers my part and the petition was sent to. He was told, to the *Morning Chronicle*: "Then," said he, "it will never appear. That part hits Perry's faction too hard for him to print it." I was of a different opinion; but Mr. HUNT knew his man better than I did. Perry did suppress the PETITION, and suppressed it too from the other three papers as well as his own! I have the authority of the gentleman, who received the Petition from me, to assert, that it was sent to the *Chronicle Office* along with the report; and that it was "marked in;" that is to say, made part of the report itself. To-day (Thursday) I have

received it from the gentleman, who had it from me; and who, at my request, got it back from London on Tuesday last. I have before given the substance of the Petition: I here give it word for word:—

"To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled, the Petition of the Freeholders, Landholders, and other Inhabitants of the County of Southampton, paying Taxes;

"SHEWETH,—That the Taxes, usually denominated War Taxes, and which by law expire in a short time, cannot be pretended to be necessary any longer, since the nation is now, happily, at peace.

"That these Taxes, especially the Taxes on Property, Beer, and Malt, are grievously oppressive, and have produced distress, misery, and degradation throughout the whole of the middle and lower classes of the people, who smart under them to an insupportable degree.

"That the Taxes, which will remain, after all the War Taxes shall have been taken off, will be much more than sufficient for the maintaining of the credit and honour of the nation; provided that a system of economy and peaceful government be adopted instead of the enormous expenditure, and the all-pervading military establishment, which now exist, and which latter, though wholly unknown to our forefathers, now seem to threaten to swallow up all the ancient civil powers and distinctions of the country.

"That it is, in the opinion of your Petitioners, owing chiefly to the laws, passed during the war, against personal liberty, the freedom of the press and of public discussion, that the above evils have been so long endured.

"Therefore your Petitioners pray, that you will repeal all the laws, passed during the war, against personal liberty, the freedom of the press and of public discussion, that you will not revive or renew any of the Taxes, called War Taxes, and that you will not authorise the raising of any other Taxes in their stead.—And your Petitioners, &c."

Such, reader, was the paper, which Mr. PERRY suppressed, though he found it incorporated into a report, sent to his office, and though it had been obtained from me

under an express promise, that it would appear. It was thus kept out of three other papers, and kept from the Register too, until after the Saturday's Register was published. I do not blame the reporters. They acted fairly and honourably by the public? but, the conduct of Mr. PERRY has been precisely the contrary. It was due, not to *me*, but to *truth*, that this petition should be published. It had been rejected at the county Meeting; but there was nearly one half of the meeting in its favour. It did, too, embrace objects, which, one might have expected a printer to feel peculiar interest in; but, strange as it may seem at first sight, there are, perhaps, no persons in England such determined enemies of the *real freedom of the press* and of *free public discussion* as the proprietors of these paid-for-paragraph newspapers. They thrive by *falsehood*; and, therefore, whatever has a tendency to the triumph of *truth*, they abhor. They resemble those insects which fatten in a poisonous atmosphere. —And these are the men, who are to *enlighten* all Europe! These are the men, whose publications are to wipe away all stains from the English character! These men are to perform this work, who, in fact, have been the principal cause of all our degradation both at home and abroad.

SIR JOHN COX HIPPLESLY.

I send, with great pleasure, the following letter for publication. I do not regularly see the Bath newspapers, and did not see the publication which is mentioned in the letter.—I am glad to perceive, that an English gentleman is anxious to deny, that he made use of expressions, worthy only of such men as the proprietors of the *Times*, the *Courier*, and the *Chronicle*; and, though I cannot blame him for expressing his reprobation of "the President and his Party," I wish he had not made use of that phrase, seeing that the President *can have no party*, which is not supported by a *majority of the people*; seeing that he has no power but what *the people voluntarily put into his hands*; that he is elected by the free voice of a people, every man of whom who pays a tax has a vote; that he can neither make war or peace without the approbation of a Congress also chosen by a *free people*, and in which Congress there are *no selling and buying of seats*, nor amongst

the electors any *bribery or corruption*. This being a fact, well known to all the world, I cannot help wishing that a respectable English gentleman had refrained from the use of a phrase, fit to be applied only to the head and members of governments of a very different description.

TO MR. COBBETT.

SIR,—As you have gone to some length of animadversion upon an expression which was stated, originally, in a Bath weekly paper, and have fallen upon me, at the Somerset Meeting, I trust to your candour that you will give equal publicity to this fact—that in the same paper in the following week, an express denial appeared, "that any such expression "was made use of by me," either in speaking of the Americans, in the aggregate; or of their President and his party, of whom nevertheless I am ready to admit, that I did speak in terms of strong reprobation, without adopting terms so uncharitable and even absurd as those imputed to me. I am, Sir, your very obedient Servant,

J. COX HIPPLESLY.

STATE OF THE NATION.

MR. COBBETT.—It must be in the recollection of your readers, how often and how emphatically you have raised your warning voice against the tremendous war system, and war expenditure of our once happy country. Your calculating acuteness has been shewn in nothing more strikingly than in the full realization of the predictions which you have, again and again, offered to the consideration of our *unthinking* people, on what would be the effects of a protracted course of warfare to this country—a course of warfare as unique in its management, as awful in its termination. It could not, Sir, have ever entered into your imagination, though always on the alert in political discernment, to have conceived it possible for the councils of a nation to have obstinately pursued a scale of expenditure that could not be sustained by even the united resources of Europe at large:—Had this truly gigantic exertion been instituted for objects connected with rational liberty, and not for the re-establishment of despotic rule, the virtuous and the intelligent part of mankind might have been gratified by the *generosity* of the effort, though they must have deplored the incorrigible folly that had urged so unnatural an adventure.—

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It is almost inconceivable, though an undeniable fact, that the people of these realms, during these twenty years, have been witnessing the prodigious efforts made by their Government, to repress the growing power of France, at an immeasurable expence, as if the object could not be purchased at too high a rate, without adverting to the ways and means of meeting and enduring the ultimate burthen. The ruin of this country has been its *paper credit*. This *Pandora's box* of civil and political mischief, has unhappily overwhelmed our *unthinking* people (*thinking* belongs no to them) with dismay and impending ruin. Well then? how does the land lay? The expences that have been incurred, the interest of the heavy loans contracted, must be paid; peace has been obtained; Bonaparte has been deposed; and the Sovereigns of Europe are sitting in solemn judgment, on, what they would have to be, the future political arrangement of the world! Now, Sir, if these splendid reveries could be carried into effect as easily as they may be imagined, we might some day see them realised. But how does the case stand? Why, the British Government has been all along foremost in the field of expence as well as in that of battle. It has tried all sides, over and over again, and has at length, proved to a gaping and an astounded public, that though it has, eventually, as it were, gained all; though it has effected every object for which it began the contest, it has actually lost infinitely more than it has won; nay, that the very winnings themselves have turned out to be, (as you, Sir, have always held must be the case) its bitterest, its most irretrievable losings. In short, we have been at the expence, by all conceivable means and devices, of overthrowing the Emperor Napoleon, and of delivering from his influence the various nations of Europe, who are now beginning to discover the advantage of being at liberty to cultivate the soil, to manufacture raw materials, and to traffic in such a way as might best suit their respective interests; and all this without either feeling or acknowledging any dependence on English commerce. All they seemed to require from England was *money*, and that, it must be confessed, they have had almost to the last guinea, and are probably farther accredited for sums that none, but those conversant with

the disposal of the *secret service money* of Government, can know any thing about. —If the British Government, when it began its career of expending, when it required for the objects of the war *unlimited millions*, could have contrived to have *bona fide* provided, that all the nations receiving its subsidies, and for whom the British sword was actually unsheathed, should for ever disclaim, and abandon, all right and title to manufacture for themselves, and that they would be wholly dependent on commercial supplies from England, then indeed, some prospect would be afforded of an extended trade, and of liquidating in time the abyss of debt into which the national property is so deeply sunk. But Sir, this is not the case; it could not be the case. We have, therefore, been fighting the battles of others, and have most profligately and irretrievably sacrificed British interests to foreign and ruinous objects.—That either the British agriculturist, manufacturer, or artisan, should now have any chance of successful competition with the nations of Europe, is a vain expectation.—The miseries of an exhausting taxation are exhibited at all points. All classes of men severely feel the consequences resulting from a wasteful expenditure of public money, and, too late, begin to perceive that a *defensive* system of warfare was, and always will be, best adapted to the insulated situation and civic privileges of the British nation. The European war is at an end; that with America is also on the eve of closing; we are without a market for our agricultural produce, without a demand for our manufactured articles, and our artisans are for the best part without employment! In exchange for these wonted advantages, we have the renown of having extravagantly subsidised in turn most of the different powers of Europe; of sending a first rate Plenipotentiary to these subsidised Potentates; of engaging in treaties offensive and defensive with them; of at least *amply sharing* in the pleasing task of remunerating the services, *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, connected with the abrupt and strange termination of the late European war; and finally, though not least in either tinselled grandeur, or aristocratic fame, we may boast, as the legitimate offspring of these portentous times, *Knights Grand Crosses, ditto Commanders, and ditto Companions,*

in vast abundance, all animated with a chivalrous ardour for military glory that will at least render a disposition to war, if not its actual existence, the order of the day. How far this new batch and hot-bed scheme of military aristocracy, exclusively in the erection and patronage of the royal authority, can be regarded as consistent with the constitutional privileges of British freedom, no one is more competent to judge than yourself; and were the subject to fall under your usually able discussion, it may be justly presumed, that it would be salutarily operative in restraining the inordinate attempts, and, indeed, rapid strides that have been made, are making, and will hereafter be made, for subjugating this land of ancient freedom to a military sway, not unlike that experienced by the *Cossack tribes* of the Autocrat of all the Russias! It is high time for Britons to turn with aversion from the senseless, the enslaving mummery of court pageantry. *Freemen* should avoid them as hostile to independence, and disdain them as utterly contemptible. The Americans, by their triumphant bravery, evince what a handful of men, determined to live and die under the *sacred banner of freedom*, can achieve. The issue of the contest they have had to sustain, is engraved on the heart of every friend of civil liberty in characters of indelible delight, and will be recorded in the historic page for her admiration, her solace, and the encouragement of posterity. American independence is as invulnerable and as immortal as the nature of human steadfastness can render it. A scheme of Government, founded on a correct estimation of civil and political rights, is at once natural, and practicable, and, as such, must be for ever entitled to an irresistible preference, in the feeling and judgment of those, who have the envied happiness of being born and bred under its auspices. The cause of civil liberty has gained infinitely more, by the heart-cheering proofs that have been recently given of *transatlantic* patriotism and courage, than it either has lost, or can lose by the jargon, the foppery, or the servility of European politics.

Jan. 29, 1815. A THINKING BRITON.

LORD COCHRANE—PERRY AND THE WHIGS!

IN the most conspicuous part of the *Morning Chronicle*, of yesterday, Mr. Perry inserted a string of resolutions, which that nest of iniquity, that vile crew at the *Stock Exchange*, have thought proper to agree to, as a sort of set off to Lord Cochrane's *unanswerable* letter to Lord Ellenborough. Nothing surely could be more detestable than this! Even that sink of corruption the *Times*, inserted only a modest paragraph, noticing the meeting of the Sub-committee, and without even naming Lord Cochrane; thus shewing a degree of moderation toward an oppressed opponent, which the Whigs, and Perry their organ, had not decency to evince.—These resolutions (which Perry has evidently been *paid* for inserting) state; over and over again, the hacknied evidence of the hackney coachman, and the hackney post-boy, on the subject of the colour of De Berenger's coat; which evidence has been completely falsified, in the most incontestible manner. Lord Cochrane has already so ably and so effectually vindicated himself, that it would be supererogation in me to say a syllable on this subject. It is the detestable conduct of Perry and the Whigs, in becoming the trumpet of the *Stock Exchange Committee*, that I wish the public not to overlook. Lord Cochrane has been ever the steady *opposer* of *places, pensions, and corruption* in all its branches. Nothing more is wanted to explain the deadly hatred of Perry and the Whigs.

ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, LETTER VI.

"If we were to use Violence in defending the Faith, the Bishops would oppose it."

SAINTE-HILARY, lib. i.

TALLEYRAND [in a memoir read at the National Institution of Paris concerning the commercial relations of the United States of America with Great Britain in the year 1794] says "That RELIGIOUS TOLERATION in its fullest extent, is one of the most powerful Guarantees of social tranquillity: for where Liberty of Conscience is respected every other cannot fail to be so." A sentiment like this from a man who stands unrivalled for his knowledge in Political Science ought to have some weight. How opposite are the opinions of this enlightened

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statesman, this second Machiavel, to the blind mistaken notions of those stupid kings, who would fain attempt to produce harmony among their subjects by endeavouring to enforce their adherence to one particular set of Tenets. How absurd is it to suppose we can make people of different educations, and capacities ever think alike; that we can enable persons whose understandings are unequal to comprehend every thing with the same facility, and to render men of various ages and constitutions, capable of seeing with the same ease and perspicuity through the same pair of spectacles. If Kings and Priests were the architects of the human brain, they might with some justice dictate its operations; but since our faculties are produced by NATURE, directed by NECESSITY, and uncontrolled by their fiat; and since they have no more government over their own minds than they have over ours, it is the most arrogant presumption, the most ridiculous folly, and the most diabolical tyranny, to persecute us for our opinions. Do not our ideas of any subject depend entirely on the manner in which it is represented to us, or the state of our understanding to receive the impression? Are not all our notions the effect either of our education, or the circumstances and situations in which we have been placed? Who then can command opinion, or constrain belief? Where is the merit or the crime either of BELIEF or DISBELIEF, since neither of them are in our power, but dependent entirely upon the state of our intellects on the quality of the evidence offered to our senses? How weak and childish too, is the plan of promoting social tranquillity by force and persecution? Is it not palpable that clemency and moderation are much more calculated to produce harmony, loyalty, and peace, than threats and imprisonment? The Emperor Charles the 6th was an ambitious tyrant, and a persecuting bigot, who caused a system of faith to be prepared for Germany, and marched at the head of his armies against those cities which refused to receive it. When grown old, he gave up the idle pomp of a court, the trumpery appendages of royalty, and the false glory of a Warrior, to spend his last days in the monastery of St. *Justus*, in Plazencia. One of his pastimes in this solitude was mechanics, in which he was assisted by *Tarrians*,

a very celebrated artist of that age. He spent much time in the construction of clocks and watches, of which he kept a great number in constant motion, but found to his mortification, after various trials, that he could not bring any two of them to equal time. This circumstance, it is said, caused him to reflect with wonder and with shame, on his own weakness in having wasted so much labor, and been guilty of such barbarities, in the more futile speculation of compelling his subjects to think exactly alike, concerning the inscrutable mysteries and ineffable beatitudes of our Holy Religion. If the genius of luxury and sloth, of folly and vanity, of pride, robbery, slaughter, and ambition, can ever spare the tyrants of the present day a few moments to turn over the page of History, in order to review the lives of former despots, what a lesson must the foregoing relation afford them. But it seems that government is the only science that is not suffered to be improved by experience; for we find, notwithstanding the many useful precepts that may be deduced from the annals of the world, and the fate of nations, that power and profit to themselves, instead of peace and prosperity to the people, are still the ruling principles of most monarchical and aristocratical governments. It is for this reason that they all take to themselves a *State Religion* for their handmaid, in the same manner that a man takes a wife to assist him in his domestic concerns. They find it a powerful auxiliary to arbitrary sway, in as much as the priesthood of the state religion, though fattening upon the industry of the people, are mediately or immediately dependent upon them for their appointments; consequently they become convenient tools in their hands to keep the public mind in *acquired ignorance*; and, as we have seen in former times, to preach up non-resistance, passive obedience, the divine rights of Kings, the sacred obligation of paying tythes, or any set of opinions, that may suit the Government or their own interests.—A state religion, by monopolizing all consequence, perfection, and privilege to itself, naturally creates an envious distinction in society; causes its members to look upon others with contempt; and, by depriving those of their civil rights whose conscience will not permit them to come within its pale, necessarily fomented jealousy and

discontent.—I know it is the belief of many, that a State Religion is necessary for the well being of the community, and that if deprived of it we should be reduced to the greatest anarchy and confusion. That morality is requisite to preserve good order, I admit; but, at the same time, I must contend, that a wise Government might by its *civil* code alone, sufficiently protect the morals of the people, and secure the public peace, without requiring or compelling them to conform to any particular mode of Faith.

On the fundamental principles of morality, most people are agreed, because they are taught by *experience* that the observance of them is essential to their happiness both individually and collectively; but when the innumerable chimeras of faith and superstition are introduced and enforced, the flames of strife and contention are immediately kindled, the harmony of society is interrupted, the dearest ties of friendship and kindred often severed, all the baser passions of the heart called into action; and this too by the very systems which pretend to teach us meekness humility and brotherly love. If it be objected, that morality alone is not sufficient to restrain the bulk of mankind, and that *certain* exotic doctrines must be kept in vogue to facilitate the government of the vulgar, I would answer, that neither the sincere nor the *political* lover of religion can have just grounds to fear on that account. The admirer of general piety cannot for a moment conceive that steeple houses, and priests, have any thing to do with morality, or that it requires pompous ceremonies and pantomimical mummeries to keep the spark alive. On the contrary, if he reflect seriously, he will agree with me, that it is much more likely to perish beneath the weight of the innumerable formalities, and tradesman like attentions of a state religion. The crafty statesman who like *Strabo*, a despiser of all kind of superstition for himself, yet contends that some buyers are necessary for the vulgar, need not fear that exotic doctrines would be less taught or of less effect if not enforced by law. If he has any insight into the state of society, or the nature of man he perceives that the greater part of our species must necessarily be deprived of the means and opportunity of thinking for themselves, and consequently that there will always be priests, conjurers,

and all those sort of persons who derive their existence from teaching, pleasing, or bamboozling others. He will also perceive that there is no more reason to expect that religion, religious houses, and dealers in religion, would be done away with if not commanded by law, than there is to suppose that an act of parliament expedient to prevent the practice of eating and drinking. Conventicles of dissenters are supported in a much more equitable way than the steeple houses of the state religion; they are upheld entirely by the voluntary contributions of those who are pleased with the performances exhibited there. But while a man subscribes towards an Institution congenial with his ideas, is it not a great hardship that he should be *compelled* to pay tythes and rates, to a priesthood whose doctrines he may not approve, and to build, repair, and beautify their costly temples, although he has never set a foot in them. Some would call this mode of conduct EXTORTION, a term too coarse for me to use; but I express my sentiments by saying, that the Merry Andrew who raises his booth in Smithfield during the period of Bartholomew fair, gains his livelihood in an *honest* manner, because he only receives his stipulated price from such as are pleased with his cunning tricks, or dextrous exploits. He does not go round from house to house, throughout the neighbourhood, and *extort* so much a head from the inhabitants, merely because their residence stood contiguous to his show; nor does he tell them for their only consolation, that they *might* have come and witnessed his *juggling if they had chose*. It will easily be perceived, that I wish every man to deal where he likes best, but not to quarrel with his neighbour for purchasing the same article at another place. Surely no *fair tradesman* would presume to demand the price of his commodity from those who have not partaken of it. A state religion is a institution that can only thrive under the auspices of aristocracy or kingship; it is seldom cherished in democracies. In the genuine republic of America no such a thing can exist, because their constitution acknowledges a *universal right of conscience, worship, and artizanship*. This being the case, a man's religious opinions do not disqualify him from becoming a member either of the

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representative or executive departments of government, which being composed of persons of all denominations, prevents the people from having one particular system crammed down their throats; and if such a measure was attempted it would gain no stability, because the citizens of the United States possess the *happy privilege* of dismissing their public servants, from the lowest to the highest, at stated periods, in case they misconduct themselves; for even the head servant in that country is not, like that of some others, *incapable* of doing wrong or being cashiered.—To prove that this unlimited toleration is more productive of harmony than the blind intolerance of other governments, I shall conclude with the remarks of Talleyrand in the same work to which I referred in the beginning of this letter.

—Inclination, or if you please, habit, incessantly attracts the Americans towards England: interest does so still more; for the first and most important consideration in a new country is, without doubt, to increase its riches. The proof of such a general disposition manifests itself every where in America: we find evidence of it in every part of their conduct. The customs, with regard to religion, are themselves strongly tinged with it. I will mention the result of what I have observed in this respect; its connexion with my subject cannot fail to be perceived. We know that in England, religion has preserved a powerful influence over the mind; that even the most independent philosophy has not there dared to divest itself of religious ideas; from the time of Luther, all sects have found their way thither; that all have maintained themselves, and that many have there taken their rise. We know the share which they have had in the great political changes; in short, that all have been transplanted into America, and that some of the states owe their origin to them. It appears, at first, as if these sects would, after their transmigration, preserve their original state, and it is natural to conclude that they might likewise agitate America. But how great is the surprise of the traveller, when he sees them all co-exist in that *perfect calm* which, as it would seem, can never be ruffled;

“when, in the very same house, the father, the mother, the children, each follows *peaceably*, and *without opposition*, that mode of worship which he prefers! I have been more than once a witness of this spectacle which nothing that I had ever seen in Europe could have prepared me to expect. On the days consecrated to religion, all the individuals of the same family set out together; each went to the minister of his own sect; and they afterwards returned home, to employ themselves in their common domestic concerns. This diversity of opinion did not produce any in their feelings, or in their habits; there were *no disputes, not even a question on the subject*. Religion there seems to be an individual secret, which no one thinks that he has a right to doubt or to investigate. Thus, when there arrives in America, from any country of Europe, an ambitious sectary, eager to afford a triumph of his doctrine, by inflaming the minds of men, far from finding, as in other places, persons disposed to enlist under his banner, he is scarcely even perceived by his neighbours; his enthusiasm is neither attractive nor interesting; he inspires neither hatred nor curiosity: in short, every one perseveres steadfastly in his own religious opinions, and uninterruptedly prosecutes his temporal concerns. This apathy, which *cannot be roused by the most furious spirit of proselytism*, and which it is our present business to point out, not to account for, certainly takes its immediate rise from the *perfect toleration* of the different sects of religion. In America *no form of worship is proscribed, no one established by law; and therefore there are no disturbances about religion*. But this perfect toleration has itself a principle; which is, that religion, although it is there every where a *real sentiment*, is more especially a sentiment of habit; all the ardor of the moment is employed about the means of speedily improving worldly prosperity; and hence results the chief cause of the entire calm of the Americans, respecting every thing which is not, according to this constitution of their minds, either a medium or an obstacle.”—I am, dear Sir, your's, &c. ERASMUS PERKINS, London, Jan. 30, 1815-

AMERICAN DOCUMENTS.—As our Government has not thought it expedient, like the *free* Government of America, to publish any part of the proceedings at Ghent, and as the American newspapers have not, since the commencement of the war, been delivered regularly on their arrival in this country, I have been under the necessity of laying the official documents before my readers as they reached me, without any regard to the order of their dates.—This irregularity has occasioned a chasm in the publication of these documents, which I intend to fill up, as they arrive, in future numbers of the Register. It may be thought, that as the war is at end, the proceedings at Ghent have now lost all their interest. To me, however, who regard that war, its causes, the wonderful events that took place during its continuance, and the consequences it must produce, as the most astonishing occurrences recorded in history, and as of the greatest importance to the cause of freedom, and the happiness of the human race. To me, who contemplate the subject in this light, no official document, however minute, that bears any reference to this glorious struggle, can appear of a trivial or uninteresting nature; far less can I consider documents illustrative of the more important topics under the discussion of the parties, as undeserving of notice.

The Ministers Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary of the United States to the Plenipotentiaries of his Britannic Majesty.

"Ghent, Aug. 24, 1814.

"The undersigned, Ministers Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary from the United States of America, have given to the official Note which they have had the honour of receiving from his Britannic Majesty's Plenipotentiaries the deliberate attention which the importance of its contents required, and have now that of transmitting to them their answer on the several points to which it refers. They would present to the consideration of the British Plenipotentiaries, that Lord Castlereagh, in his letter of the 4th of November, 1813, to the American Secretary of State, pledges the faith of the British Government, that 'they were willing to enter into discussion with the Government of America for the conciliatory ad-

justment of the differences subsisting between the two States, with an earnest desire on their part to bring them to a favourable issue, upon principles of perfect reciprocity, not inconsistent with the established maxims of public law, and with the maritime rights of the British Empire.' This fact alone might suffice to shew, that it ought not to have been expected that the American Government, in acceding to this proposition, should have extended its terms, and furnished the undersigned with instructions authorising them to treat with the British Plenipotentiaries respecting Indians situated within the boundaries of the United States. That such expectation was not entertained by the British Government might also have been inferred from the explicit assurances which the British Plenipotentiaries gave, on the part of their Government at the first conference which the undersigned had the honour of holding with them, that no events, subsequent to the first proposal for this negotiation, had, in any manner, varied either the disposition of the British Government, that it might terminate in a peace honourable to both parties, or the terms upon which they would be willing to conclude it. It is well known that the differences which unhappily subsist between Great Britain and the United States, and which ultimately led to the present war, were wholly of a maritime nature, arising principally from the British Orders in Council, in relation to blockades, and from the impressment of mariners on board of American vessels. The boundary of the Indian territory had never been a subject of difference between the two countries. Neither the principles of reciprocity, the maxims of public law, nor the maritime rights of the British Empire could require the permanent establishment of such boundary. The novel pretension now advanced could no more have been anticipated by the Government of the United States, in forming instructions for this negotiation, than they seem to have been contemplated by that of Great Britain in November last in proposing it. Lord Castlereagh's Note makes the termination of the war to depend on a conciliatory adjustment of the differences then subsisting between the two States, and on no other condition whatever. Nor could the American Government have foreseen that Great Britain, in order to obtain peace for the Indians, residing within the dominions of the United States, whom she had induced to take part with her in the war, would demand that they should be made parties to the treaty between the two nations, or that the boundaries of their lands should be permanently and irrevocably fixed by that treaty. Such a proposition is contrary to

(To be continued.)